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PRESS RELEASE

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ELEVEN MEMBERS OF THE 22ND STREET CREW INDICTED UNDER D.C.'S GANG AFFILIATION LAW

WASHINGTON - A 40-count indictment has been returned against eleven members of the 22nd Street crew charging them with Conspiracy, Criminal Street Gang Affiliation, and numerous drug trafficking charges, U.S. Attorney Jeffrey A. Taylor, Metropolitan Police Chief Cathy L. Lanier, Federal Bureau of Investigation Assistant Director in Charge of the Washington Field Office Joseph Persichini, Jr., and U.S. Park Police Acting Assistant Chief Salvatore Lauro announced today.

In 2006, the Council of the District of Columbia passed legislation to combat the growing problem of criminal street gangs in our city. The legislation, which was signed into law by the Mayor, not only criminalizes certain conduct by gang members designed to create or perpetuate the existence of street gangs, but also provides for additional criminal charges and penalties when certain crimes are committed as part of the activity of a criminal street gang.

In mid-2006, a joint task force consisting of FBI agents, Metropolitan Police and U.S. Park Police officers and detectives began an operation in and around the 3400-3600 blocks of 22nd Street, SE, to investigate gang activity. Specifically, undercover law enforcement operations resulted in dozens of videotaped drug buys from members of the 22nd Street crew.

The operation resulted in the return earlier this week of a 40-count indictment by a Superior Court grand jury against eleven individuals, who are charged with violating the new Criminal Street Gang law, in addition to conspiracy and narcotics charges.

According to the indictment, the eleven defendants were members and active participants of a criminal street gang, referred to as the "22nd Street" crew, and based principally in the 3400, 3500 and 3600 blocks of 22nd Street, SE, Washington, D.C. The indictment alleges that the

purposes and activities of the gang included: (1) financing the members' operations through drug trafficking; (2) protecting and safeguarding the members' turf and base of operations; (3) promoting and enhancing the reputation and stature of the criminal street gang and its members; (4) and protecting the criminal street gang and its members from detection, investigation, and apprehension by law enforcement and from conviction of criminal charges. Specifically, the indictment charges each defendant with participating in a narcotics conspiracy. Each defendant is also charged with one or more drug offenses and a corresponding criminal street gang count for committing the drug offense as a member of, and for the benefit of, the criminal street gang. If convicted of the charges, the defendants face sentencing ranges of up to 40 years in prison.

Beginning yesterday morning, law enforcement officers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Park Police, and the Metropolitan Police Department, spread throughout the District of Columbia, and executed the arrest and search warrants. Search warrants were executed in at least three different locations in the District of Columbia. Those arrested yesterday include Demetrius R. Prysock, 21, James O. Gray, 26, Demetrui Wilkins, 24, Charles Chandler, 22, and Paris L. Cottingham, 24. Four additional defendants were previously arrested and are currently incarcerated pending trial on other charges.

"The criminal street gang indictment against eleven members of the 22nd Street crew marks an important step forward in the war on gang activity in our nation's capital," said U.S. Attorney Taylor.

"The arrests were the result of the hard work of the FBI-MPD Safe Streets Task Force. They have one goal only – to rid our communities of violent criminals, and the 22nd Street Crew is no exception. The arrests put the crew on notice that we will find them no matter where they are," said MPD Chief Lanier.

"Today's announcement of the indictment and nine arrests signify that the FBI will continue to use all available resources and join with our law enforcement partners to stop the violent and illegal gang activities that are threatening the safety of our citizens," said FBI Assistant Director in Charge Persichini.

"Through the combined efforts of federal and local enforcement agencies, we have become more effective in combating criminal activity," said U.S. Park Police Acting Assistant Chief Lauro. "The visitors and residents of the District of Columbia are safer because of the communications and partnerships built by this Task Force."

The case was investigated by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Laura R. Bach and John Giovannelli and will be prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Sean Tonolli and Todd Gee.

An Indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of criminal laws and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

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